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ABSTRACT

This paper considers the issue of moral consequences of what researchers construct through qualitative research. The paper builds upon an academic married couple's respective and conjoint experiences and the ways in which they have reflected upon these in the light of contemporary theory, scholarship, and research. It addresses levels and domains of "we-ness" implied in the topic and foregrounds the context which they personally work day by day. The paper cites three conceptual principles which can serve as the basis of ethical human discourse in research: (1) That something would harm someone else is always a good reason not to do it; (2) A person always has the ethical obligation to try to explicate any social practice that there is reason to believe brings personal advantage or privileges his/her group over other people or other groups; and (3) The distinction between "use value" and "exchange value" is an especially important consideration for research activity under contemporary Australian conditions. The paper then discusses research participants, in process concerns, "back end" concerns, and research supervision. Noting that research always inhabits a larger context than the immediate research practice itself, the paper names some actual and potential deleterious moral consequences for researchers and their work present in the current Australian context. (Contains 49 references.) (NKA)

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The Moral Consequences of What We Construct through Qualitative Research.

by Colin Lankshear and Michele Knobel

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THE MORAL CONSEQUENCES OF WHAT WE CONSTRUCT THROUGH QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Colin Lankshear and Michele Knobel

a paper prepared for The Australian Association for Research in Education Annual Conference

November 1997

Introduction

In view of our own circumstances and recent histories we welcomed the invitation to think about the issue of moral consequences of what we construct through qualitative research as part of a symposium. In many ways, issues and 'realities' coalescing around our topic theme have impacted directly and profoundly on our lives and beings throughout the past five years. In this sense of 'we-ness', we are married partners. One of us has recently completed a PhD program comprising a qualitative study of everyday literacy practices in and out of school of four adolescents; beginning the process as a scholarship-supported full time doctoral student affiliated with a research concentration inside a faculty of education, and subsequently being appointed to a lectureship within the same immediate institutional setting. The other has worked throughout this same period as a full time academic in the same setting, with responsibilities for conducting, supervising, and coordinating research - much of it making claims to being qualitative research. What we say here builds on our respective and conjoint experiences, and the ways in which we have reflected upon these in the light of contemporary theory, scholarship and research.

There are, of course, further domains and levels of 'we-ness' implied in the topic. These deserve closer attention than is

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possible here, but for present purposes we will work with the following.

'We' as denoting membership of a Discourse (Gee 1996) or Discourse community - namely, qualitative research(ers), with all the variations and permutation that are conflated and blurred by this level of generality

'We' as members of more or less circumscribed 'communities' of research practice - e.g., a given Faculty, a research unit/centre, a research team

'We' as inhabitants of larger discursive research fields populated by key agents who are not researchers (or bearing researcher roles and identities) but, for example, hirers or funders of research, policy makers, education bureaucrats, politicians, governments, university administrators, and so on.

Who and what 'we' are and do ranges and varies across different 'contextual fields', and any adequate treatment of the present topic requires taking this into account.

Just as the 'we' is complex, so is the 'what'. Once again, much more needs to be said than is possible here, but a sample range of 'whats' that get constructed through qualitative research can readily be identified. These include products, practices, 'politics' (productions of power and power relationships between parties to the research act), policy information, values, expectations and so on. Products include, most obviously, texts: such things as reports, theses, books, sets of recommendations, etc. Practices comprise ways of doing things. Our various constructions of qualitative research act out, consolidate, modify or refine, create, etc., ways of doing 'it'. What we construct though qualitative research must be understood also in terms of what we construct as qualitative research. This includes a politics of some kind or another. Construed as participation in a Discourse, doing qualitative research inescapably enacts and enlists productions of power and relationships that 'carry' and 'authorise' configurations of power. This is inescapable, because any and every Discourse necessarily involves beliefs, rules, procedures, regulations, concepts,

values, protocols, and the like which position participants in different relationships to each other and, indeed, to the Discourse itself (e.g., expert, novice, researcher, researched, chief investigator, assistant, and so on). 'Doing research' of any kind is a very significant part of the 'power apparatus' in societies like our own - albeit in differing and complex ways. Furthermore, qualitative research is increasingly being procured and undertaken with a view to influencing, guiding, legitimating, rationalising, implementing, etc., policies. Hence, part of what we construct - more or less directly or indirectly - through qualitative research is often a policy climate, a policy context, or even implementations of policy (think: teachers as researchers; action research in classrooms, etc.).

Already the board is becoming somewhat cluttered. There are, however, further notions to be introduced briefly as framing devices for what follows. First, we will refer to what we call 'bearers' of moral consequences. In addition we will distinguish different 'points' of moral consequence within qualitative research acts. We will also foreground a more or less specific context within which constructions of qualitative research familiar to us are currently enacted.

'Bearers' of moral consequences are the various agents whose interests are impacted by (moral) consequences of what we construct in, as, and through qualitative research. These include those who are researched, research supervisors and trainees/students, the researcher's craft or tradition (in some sense, the 'Discourse itself' - as, for instance, implied in the notion of bringing a field or practice into disrepute), direct and indirect consumers of research, and the researcher herself together with the members of her scholarly/professional community.

By 'points' of moral consequence, we simply mean (gross) stages or phases within the processes and acts of doing research where what we do or omit doing sets up conditions for consequences to occur. In reality, 'points' comprise practically every moment research is 'going on', but for purposes of heuristic convenience we distinguish broadly here between 'front end', 'in process', and 'back end' points, corresponding crudely to planning, implementation, and end of

project dissemination phases.

Finally, the context we will foreground is that within which we personally work day to day. This is a context marked by several noteworthy features so far as what gets constructed though qualitative research is concerned. These include:

- A diverse array of education faculties at the national level, ranging from long established graduate schools of education to former teacher education institutions reclassified as university faculties through the creation of the unified national system, via various amalgamated arrangements and varying degrees of emphasis on teacher education as the bread and butter economic base. Our own immediate setting is a reclassified teacher education situation involving multiple partners brought together under a single institutional umbrella by an amalgamation. Research capacity at 'national competitive' level is finite, research experience is uneven across members of the faculty, a little over 50% of academic staff have doctorates.
- A range of higher degrees (Masters by coursework, Masters by research, EdD, PhD) following on from undergraduate teacher education degrees which are severely curtailed in terms of research and theoretical engagement, ethos, and emphasis.
- The operation of a research quantum against which funding is indexed, and which emphasises commonwealth competitive grant scheme income, research degree completions, and four key categories of publications.
- Funding harnessed to EFTSU and WEFTSU, with the implication that a research student not enrolled is funding foregone.
- Contracted research and 'research-based consultancies' are increasingly important as modes of income generation.
- Increasing 'steerage' of funded research emphases and priorities by government - in accordance with policy-driven funded programs, formally designated national priorities, etc. - and growing importance of business and industry as collaborative research partners and sources of funding.
- Increasing teacher-student ratios, intensified teaching

and administrative demands on rank and file lecturer-researchers.

A Note on Moral Consequences and Research-Related Ethical Concerns

By moral consequences we mean consequences for the good or harm of human beings within areas of human activity where people can reasonably be assigned rights and obligations (cf May 1995; Warnock 1970). There is, of course, endless debate about 'the nature of morality' and approaches to 'ethics', (conceived as the disciplinary investigation of moral principles and moral value), and we cannot get into that here. Quite simply, though we hope not simplistically, we begin from the fact that the things we do and say, believe and pursue - or refrain from saying, doing and pursuing - have, 'intentionally or not, consciously or not, and in tandem with others' beliefs [actions, behaviours, pursuits, omissions, etc.] and the institutions in our society, effects on other people' (Gee 1993: 292). These effects may be more or less beneficial or benign, more or less harmful or deleterious, or more or less neutral.

We see effects as harmful to the extent that they deprive others of what they or the society they inhabit regard as 'goods', and beneficial to the extent that they endow others with what they or their society regard as 'goods' (ibid). Goods range over such things as health, dignity, status, economic resources, power, esteem, pleasure, material possessions, security, integrity, and so on. From a moral point of view, we can see people as having, at the very least, rights to expect others not to harm them/deprive them of goods, and corresponding obligations not to harm others/deprive them of goods. More positively, we might see people as ideally having obligations to believe, think, and act in ways that actively benefit other people/promote goods for them, and to have corresponding rights.

At this point, we want to highlight Gee's reference to the 'in tandem-ness' of what we say and do with what others say and do and the operation of institutions in our society. This invokes a characteristically postmodern and poststructuralist approach to morality, recognising that in important ways it

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is not simply human individuals/agents who speak and act within social contexts, but also that Discourses speak and act through us; that our acts and words do not necessarily have effect/consequences on their own, but also in conjunction with other discursively ordered and arranged states of affairs.

This has very important implications for how we look at our topic here. For it is not enough simply to focus on what we as individuals or teams (try/try not to) do and say within research practices, and the (actual/possible) effects of these doings and sayings on others - although these things are very important and bind us morally. In addition, we have to attend also to the larger discursive and institutional and collective forces and tendencies that are in play, and that are mediated and 'carried' in and through our myriad 'individual' acts of participation in qualitative research. That is, we must attend not only to what our involvement in the Discourse produces directly, immediately, and on those 'present' in the given research activity, but also at what we are complicit in consolidating, shoring up, legitimating, and naturalising as carriers and co-creators/maintainers of the Discourse at a more general level of effect(s). In this sense, our 'proper' topic is not just about moral consequences of what we construct through qualitative research, but also about what we should aim to construct as qualitative research in the light of our pursuing understanding of moral consequences.

Gee (1993: 292-293) derives from the work of Wheatley (1970: 115-134) two conceptual principles which are directly relevant to our concern here. These are principles which can serve as the basis of ethical human discourse, a discourse we have been drawn into by the very topic under discussion. They are:

1. That something would harm someone else (deprive them of what they or the society they are in view as "goods") is always a good reason (though perhaps not a sufficient reason) not to do it.

2. One always has the ethical obligation to try to explicate (render overt and conscious) any social practice that there is reason to believe advantages oneself or one's group over other people or other groups.

The first of these principles refers to the more obvious sphere of ethical concern about moral consequences of qualitative research - acts or omissions which cause harm more or less directly. This encourages a focus on more or less specific aspects of practice. The second principle, however, invites us to look more deeply and generally at larger/broader constitutive effects or 'productions' of a Discourse (or identity/meaning-constituting social practice). These may include such things as the way a practice enacts or maintains regulatory effects, buttresses social hierarchies, differentiates between groups in interest serving ways, functions to allocate goods unfairly, and so on.

One Final Conceptual Consideration

As a final conceptual ingredient to inform our substantive discussion of moral consequences of what we construct through qualitative research, we offer the distinction between 'use value' and 'exchange value' as an especially important consideration for research activity under contemporary Australian conditions.

The distinction is most often associated with marxist economic theory pertaining to labour and commodity production. A thing's use value consists in its usefulness in meeting a human want or need through direct consumption of that thing. The use value of the vegetables we grow at home is in terms of meeting our need for food through eating them. A thing's exchange value comprises its worth in a market. The exchange value of vegetables we grow would consist in its saleability and what we could get for them. For something to be sellable - to have exchange value - it must, however, have a use value for someone else ; it must meet a need for someone else who will consume it, otherwise it would not be

bought.

Human productive activity, therefore, can be turned to two different kinds of production: the production of use values (production for direct consumption to meet a need or a want - whether for 'physical' needs, for 'pleasure', or whatever), and production of exchange values (production for sale or exchange in a market). Products created for exchange rather than for unmediated satisfaction of needs or wants through direct consumption are referred to as commodities (see Marx 1976: Ch. 1; Fischer 1973: Chs 2-4; Mandel 1970: 9-11).

From this perspective we can view engagement in qualitative research along a continuum between research for producing use values through direct consumption by the researchers, and research for producing commodities to be exchanged in some kind of a market. Equally, we can look at our own research work/activity (not the product, but the act of working on/labouring at research), and conceive this very work/labour/activity along the same continuum. Our capacity for doing research work can be for us more or less a use value, insofar as we deploy it for purposes that meet our needs or wants more or less directly; it can be for us more or less an exchange value when we put it on the market in exchange for money or other credits; or any admix of both.

This distinction can be developed in diverse ways that bear on moral consequences of what we construct through qualitative research. These include issues of the extent to which the research we are engaged in is 'authentic' to us and draws on our energised commitments to 'doing the job thoroughly and with the utmost integrity; issues of the extent to which we need to 'farm' work out to research assistants on the lowest possible rates, in order to be able to produce the research 'within budget' or, better still in times of 'income generation', at a tidy profit; issues of the extent to which some participants in the research get to endure routine fragmented work of basically an 'executing/carrying out' nature, while others specialise in conceiving the tasks, doing what they choose to do (as befits their 'talents' and 'reputations'?), and claiming authorial kudos; and so on. We will endeavour to weave these considerations through some of the examples which follow.

A Framework for Discussing Typical Cases

In what follows we will draw on our own research experiences, together with our theoretical and conceptual investments, to cover as broad and illuminating a range of concrete examples as we can manage. To do this we employ a framework - a matrix - with 'bearers of moral consequences' (the researched, trainees/novice researchers, research supervisors, research assistants, consumer of research, the researcher's craft, the researcher) on one axis, and 'points of moral consequence' (front end, in process, back end) on the other. Through the examples we choose for various 'spaces' within the matrix, we will try to convey varying constructions (and elements of constructions) of qualitative research, and link these to what we identify as moral consequences. Considerations of context will also be woven into our account.

The Researched

i. At the front end

Long before fieldwork begins, qualitative researchers consciously or unconsciously make numerous decisions and act on various assumptions which can have diverse and quite unanticipated moral consequences. Take, for example, matters of participant selection, obtaining consent, and establishing trust. Participant selection is always influenced by project goals and researcher assumptions and worldviews. In a recent study of children's language practices (Knobel 1997), the researcher was hoping to identify significant differences in practice around her subjects. She purposefully selected a family from a low socioeconomic area, and for a long time persisted in describing this family in terms of the local community, rather than in relation to what the participants actually said and the kinds of activities in which they engaged. It wasn't until after official data collection ceased and she was chatting informally to the mother of this family that the mother said with obvious exasperation, "But you keep writing about us as though we're poor! My husband

makes $60 000 a year!" The 'need' to have low socioeconomic participants in the study blinkered observations and interpretations of the everyday lives of the members of this particular family. The researcher's representation of them had unintended moral consequences at the point where the 'researched' experienced the researcher's construction or naming of them as identitied beings/subjects.

Beyond such occurrences, the selection process itself is fraught withethical issues, such as: what selection criteria are to be used, how will they be employed, whether they will be made available to participants who ask "Why did you choose me?", and the extent to which the researcher knows the participants prior to the study. These and similar aspects bear directly on research outcomes in terms of validity and trustworthiness, as well as on demonstrating respect for people as research participants rather than merely scientific subjects (objects?).

In certain kinds of qualitative investigations, such as ethnographic-type research and/or long-term study, there are real risks of participants being put upon, made to feel inadequate, and so on. Ethical issues here include dilemmas and trade offs around potential participants' rights to privacy versus the researcher's need to obtain telephone numbers or addresses to establish contact. Commentators on the ethics of qualitative researched have criticised the often uneven power relations established in research projects where the researcher is backed by the university or government agencies. Participants, especially if they are teachers, may feel that there is no room for negotiation or, that it is impossible for them to decline to participate. One teacher brought the unevenness of the researcher-researched relationship out into the open by stating, "I don't mind if you write up my classroom practices negatively - I know you won't get the full story, so you can't hurt me". Such examples demonstrate the necessity to establish participants' trust in the researcher and in the integrity of the project itself. This includes letting them know the purpose for conducting the research and to what ends it is most likely to be put once it is completed. This information should be conveyed to the participants as honestly and in as much

general detail as possible without jeopardising the integrity of the project, but in a way that helps them to understand what they are 'buying into' when they agree to participate in the study.

Such matters are integral to negotiating informed consent and applying 'codes of research ethics'. How we construct and enact such 'front end' components of qualitative research practice assumes great importance in the contemporary context of escalating contract research and burgeoning numbers of research students. Experience here and abroad shows that 'ethical research practices' are often designed and imposed more to protect universities from litigation than to seriously address considerations of participants' wellbeing. Written consent from participants is not an automatic guarantee that the study will be ethical; indeed, some researchers now feel 'that consent forms have become like "rental car contracts" (Hilts 1995)', aimed at protecting the company but not necessarily engaging with the possible moral consequences of participating in a study (Denzin 1997: 288). This is especially pertinent to situations of contracted research, where researchers work to tight budgets and deadlines and, possibly, for clients for whom finer points of moral consequence are not of pressing concern. In such cases pressures and temptations exist to 'get' permission or consent as 'efficiently' as possible, and to 'honour' it by observing such procedures as taking reasonable steps to protect anonymity and, perhaps, by running member checks of the final report.

From a more optimal perspective, however, seeking, obtaining, documenting, and honouring informed consent are indissolubly related to issues of trust and honesty, and bring with it demanding researcher obligations to protect the privacy and to respect the dignity of every study participant. This can prove vexing when conducting classroom-based case study research where, for example, consent has been obtained for the particular students on whom one is focusing and the teacher, but not from other students in the class who necessarily become part of the data collected. Likewise, even if informed consent is obtained from all class members and their caregivers, dilemmas arise when other people - such as

subject specialist teachers, parent helpers, teacher aides, and the like - visit the classroom without knowing a researcher is present and collecting interactional data. This is exacerbated when collecting data about young people in out-of-school contexts, and researcher obligations of honesty and obtaining informed consent become even less controllable 'grey areas' (cf., Burgess 1989, Glesne and Peshkin 1992: 111).

Concern here with moral consequences goes far beyond specific outcomes such as may occur from, say, unwittingly implicating/compromising in some way or another subjects who have not consented to participate and/or potentially exposing the practices of participants to identification. These are important concerns. At stake more deeply, however, is the fact that our particular discursive constructions of qualitative research within concrete contexts are simultaneously lived responses to a much wider morality that are, in turn, threads within a much larger social fabric. How we enact 'obtaining consent', 'establishing trust', 'protecting privacy', etc., are our immediate contributions to the moral quality of human life and the quality of moral human life. As acts/responses they do not live and die unto themselves, but contribute to what such ideals as 'respect for persons', 'reciprocity', 'non exploitation', 'the right to dignity' and so on actually amount to in the world, and how they subsequently come to be defined, operationalised, understood, regarded, and practised. For example, something very substantial and important changed, when - in conjunction with larger processes and practices - the social ideal of concern for 'equality' was transformed into a concern for 'equity' as values and principles associated with a welfare state ethos were increasingly displaced by those of a minimalist devolved state. This is the kind of effect we have to keep in mind, together with consideration of more direct, identifiable, and immediate effects.

At this level of concern, there is an ocean of difference in terms of moral consequences between perfunctory enactments of a principle like respect for persons within contract-driven/time-pressured 'rental car'-type constructions of obtaining consent, and the highly

conscientious and often agonised negotiations that occur when researchers who are profoundly committed to research ethics set about - in many cases guided by past experiences - living out the principle of respect for persons at every step in their research. At some point, practices of the latter kind may well run into conflict or contradiction with a research quantum ethos ...

ii. In process concerns

Participants' trust brings with it obligations for the researcher to maintain confidences and to respect privacy in all sorts of ways that might not have been apparent or made explicit at the time of framing and obtaining informed consent.. For example, in different studies in which we have been involved, we have been told of nervous breakdowns, childhood traumas, family secrets, and the like which have not been prefaced as 'secrets' in the data collection. What is to be done with such information, especially if it has significant import for interpretations and findings? There are moral implications and possible moral consequences in all directions here. To include it in reported work risks participants' vulnerability; to leave it out may compromise rigour; to negotiate it might risk pain or intrusiveness, or eat into time participants had not reckoned on having to give when they consented to be researched.

Maintaining trust also involves reciprocity during and after data collection. In qualitative research, reciprocity is enacted more in terms of the exchange of 'favours and commitments' that 'build a sense of mutual identification' (Glazer 1982: 50, cited in Glesne and Peshkin 1992: 122; see also Lather 1991: 60). This is not an easy task, since there seem to be few things a researcher has to offer that come even close to equalling the generosity of participants who allow the researcher to observe for hours, if not weeks, in their classrooms; who open their homes to observations and inventories; or who endure seemingly interminable questions about processes, rituals, habits, and other practices. In our own research we aim partially to enact reciprocity by recording all actions and utterances diligently and

meticulously - taking special pains to do so when we don't agree with their views or actions - and respecting their reasons for acting and speaking in such ways. Reciprocity also includes completing seemingly mundane - but often appreciated - tasks, such as lending a hand with drying the dishes, chopping vegetables, child minding, acting as a sounding board for ideas, actively listening as a participant talks through a problem he is facing, writing referee statements, accompanying the teacher on playground or bus duty, arranging visits to the university for students to use the computing equipment, offering and channelling obsolete university equipment into resource deprived classrooms (which can involve much paperwork and negotiation), offering inservice sessions, and so on (see also Glesne and Peshkin 1992). Here again, these are not simply individual acts whose enactment or omission issues in more or less direct or immediate effects, but are also simultaneously part of what our construction of qualitative research lends to the moral character of human life as a whole.

Moral consequences arise in the most invisible and unlikely places as we construct qualitative research in our practice. One example we have become increasingly familiar with has a habit of occurring in studies of cases where the central focus of investigation is someone who seems typically and otherwise to be marginalised within the social context of investigation. Our experiences have been of two quite different outcomes: (i) at times the participant becomes even further marginalised as a consequence of cooperating in the project; (ii) more typically, the participant gains short-term kudos, or even a hint of glamour, in the eyes of certain groups. The latter seems to occur most when a marginalised student is the focus (cf. McLaren 1993; Walker 1988). In one case from our local experiences, Michele noted how one young man she was observing at school over a two week period rapidly become popular in the eyes of the 'in-crowd' of lads in his class (Knobel 1997). Usually these upper primary boys would not let him play with them during breaks from class; however, during the two week observation period they allowed him onto the tennis court that was previously 'barred' to him, borrowed his jacket, and sat next to him in class. Much of their conversation with him centred on what

they would be called in the 'book' that was being written about him. Michele watched helplessly as this young man publicly abandoned his staunchest long-term friend, who was also a marginalised member of his class. She reports how she felt she had breached her duty of care obligations in terms of this young man and his real friend, and found she had no strategies at the time for dealing with these events as they unfolded. She spoke at length to his parents and teacher about what was happening and told them he might feel socially and emotionally dislocated when the fieldwork was completed. This was a steep learning curve for the researcher who, upon reflection, identified her first mistake as having tried to explain a doctoral research thesis by means of a 'book' analogy. She also subsequently realised she should have moved more swiftly when she saw the shift in group membership occurring and discussed what was happening with the young man she was studying.

iii. Back end concerns

A crucial dimension of moral consequence in qualitative research has to do with how participants and their everyday lives are framed and portrayed in subsequent reports. Descriptions and interpretations are always written from finite perspectives, and representations of events can always only ever be partial and incomplete (McLaren 1995, Soltis 1989). Indeed, qualitative researchers agree that 'writers [of qualitative research reports etc.] are always selling somebody out' (Didion 1968: xiv, cited in Denzin 1997). Accordingly, qualitative researchers have developed various strategies for addressing questions of participants' lived realities as seen through their own eyes. Let us illustrate what is at stake here by reference to 'member checking', which is a popular strategy for checking the 'authenticity' of researcher constructions or representations of the interview or the event, and so on. Briefly, this involves interactions among the researcher, interpreted data, and key participants that aim at verifying the researcher's construction of events, interview responses, and the like (Carspecken 1996, Fetterman 1989). Two examples follow.

Michele found member checking an invaluable tool in her own investigations of Jacques' everyday life at school (Knobel 1997). Her data suggested Jacques was not interested in school. He completed very little schoolwork unless constantly supervised, and had developed a range of elaborate strategies for avoiding schoolwork. These included: looking for items he seemed to have misplaced, delegating tasks to others (especially to his best mate in class), 'helping' others instead of working (e.g., filling glue pots), 'fixing Mum up' to collect resources, claiming he hadn't heard instructions, spending time planning what to do, and so on. This interpretation was supported by others' interpretations of what looked like similar cases published in articles and books (cf., McLaren 1993, Macpherson 1986, Walker 1988). After reading this interpretation of her son's actions at school, however, Jacques' mother commented that rather than merely not being interested in school, Jacques was in fact extremely anxious about it. While Michele had been told about some of the trauma Jacques experienced in relation to attending school (e.g., physical illness in the morning, nightmares), she had not appreciated the extent to which this had shaped his actions at school. Jacques' mother provided additional details about his school-based anxieties, and on the basis of these Michele revised her initial interpretation.

Member checking nonetheless brings its own ethical problems. The main 'grey area' at the nexus of member checking and reporting pertains to whose words and views will count in the final report, article, or book (cf., Clough 1992, Denzin 1997). At times, participant recall of events is open to reconstruction on their own behalf in much the same way as a researcher's field notes or transcripts, and qualitative researchers are always aware of the fact that what participants say - or think - they do, does not necessarily match what they do (Cole and Scribner 1974: 122). In our own experiences, even when actions and utterances are recorded and reported zealously and scrupulously, participants can take affront at what is written about them on the page.

This was brought home to us again recently in the context of research involving Colin. The study in question was part of a

commonwealth funded project, and involved looking at classroom use of a range of new technologies (especially multimedia applications) in some remote rural schools. The study was employing an approach designed to produce illuminating 'snapshots' of classroom practices, based on continuous observations over 2-3 days bolstered by interviews with teachers and selected students, collection of relevant documents (e.g., unit plans, school policies) and artifacts (student work, photos), and the like. The point of the 'snapshots' was not to provide information about typical or generalised practice but, rather, to capture episodes and events from which useful ideas and recommendations could be derived via input from theory, other research, conceptual work, etc.

During the days spent in these particular sites participants impressed on us the difficulties they were operating under - limited personal experience of computer use and little previous professional development in classroom applications of multimedia technologies, restricted access to key items of equipment integral to the projects they were doing and great pressure on the use of these items when they were available, a sense of isolation from the mainstream and of lagging behind where they thought city school students were at in using new technologies, isolation from technical expertise on account of the vast geographical area covered by the Technology Education Adviser, and so on. We were impressed with the commitment and enthusiasm displayed by these teachers in their unstinting efforts, against considerable odds, to provide their students with curricular experiences of multi-media and other computer-based technologies. At the same time, we wanted to theorise and describe what we saw in ways that would prove illuminating to policy makers, professional development people, curriculum and syllabus developers, teachers themselves, administrators and other researchers, among others: as well as to provide constructive feedback to the participants themselves, informed by what we had seen in the various other study sites and elsewhere.

We wrote the draft of this study component under the thematic title of 'Making Do'. The aim was to highlight the complexity of access issues when it comes to using new technologies

effectively in curricular learning: matters of access to knowledge; to notions of how new technologies are employed in mature (or 'insider') versions of social practices in the 'real world' beyond the school; to learning theory and relevant research; as well as to equipment (which is how access and equity issues often are framed and 'tackled'). The notion of 'making do' was intended to create the image of classroom participants battling against multiple constraints and limitations to achieve results which were gutsy under the conditions, but which were still a long way off the pedagogical and experiential 'eight balls' we had seen elsewhere (although considerably more than we had seen in many other cases again).

In this case, participant responses to the member checking routine reflected thinly veiled hostility in some instances and terse disagreement in others. Only one of the five responses we received accepted our account. 'Making do' was rejected as a thematic motif, with 'Breaking down the barriers' and 'Meeting the challenges' suggested as alternatives. Our interpretations were rejected at several points that seemed to us very important in terms of what we were wanting to raise as issues, sometimes on the grounds that the limited time we had spent in the classrooms did not warrant the judgments we made - since other things occurred at times when we were not there (which, clearly, is true). Interestingly, some of our descriptions of towns where we had sought to enhance anonymity by painting a picture, rather than documenting the facilities with total accuracy, were corrected.

Having undertaken the member checking we were obliged to accommodate participant responses as far as possible, especially since we had obviously not explained satisfactorily the nature and point of our 'snapshot' approach - which, clearly, meant that other readers might also read the snapshots as accounts of 'the essence of practice' in these sites. We sought the best accommodation we could by reframing the study in terms of 'Facing the challenge'. We did, however, 'soft pedal' on a number of points in ways that may not best serve the interest of research consumers, including the funders, as effectively as

the original version would have.

In many ways, the key operating variable in this example was budget. The mix of dollars available and ground to be covered - both literally (geographically) and metaphorically in terms of literature review, conceptual development, policy analysis, number of sites in the study design, etc. - called for an approach based on short intensive 'raids' on sites. These sorts of issues will be amplified in subsequent sections. This experience has strongly disinclined us from taking on any further research of the contractual nature involved here. Our experience was that the interests of neither the researched nor the researcher were well served by the conditions under which the work was done. These included having to find spaces within already burgeoning day to day work commitments for conducting studies 'on the run'. This may well be becoming a characteristic feature of what we are constructing as and through a good deal of qualitative research under current conditions.

Every researcher who employs qualitative methods to collect and interpret data needs to consider carefully the ways in which participants' words and views will be represented. This includes decisions about representing participants' speech verbatim, or whether it should be edited in order to preserve their dignity and integrity. Decisions about transcription must necessarily take into account the intended audience and the hoped-for outcomes of the research itself. For example, it may be counterproductive to report verbatim the responses of interviewees from marginal/non mainstream social groups if one's aim is to engage established positions asserting that urban middle class students are more knowledgeable or academically successful than working class students from rural areas (cf., Gee, Michaels and O'Connor 1992, Psathas and Anderson 1990). Hence, when using transcript segments as evidence in support of claims we are making on behalf of the data overall, we edit samples of speech taken from transcriptions wherever possible so that respondents are not made to seem inarticulate or misleadingly limited in any way. Such editing is difficult but important work, since the principle of respecting dignity and integrity of persons cannot be used to ride roughshod over academic rigour and the

integrity of data. And the domains within which editing recorded texts is in any way defensible are limited. For example, editing is strictly out of bounds for microanalyses of speech, although even then, we personally choose not to report any quotations that may damage the speaker in some way, be misinterpreted by the reader, or used maliciously by readers - provided always that this does not detract from the integrity of the overall report (cf., House 1990: 159). Demonstrating respect for participants extends into the writing-up phase; indeed, Ernest House claims that it is usually in this phase that the deepest disrespect and betrayals often occur. The researcher's very choice of words can produce morally unwanted consequences, making this a key decision-making point so far as ethics are concerned. As we have learned the hard way, there are real consequences from describing someone as working class when they see themselves as middle class; or in describing a practice as 'making do' when participants see themselves as 'meeting the challenge'.

In defensible acts of research, qualitative researchers enter into a contract to represent their study participants fairly and with dignity. While many research commentators tend to address ethical considerations during data collection and interpretation (e.g., House 1990, Schwandt 1997), we are convinced that it is necessary to build these considerations into the research design of every qualitative study long before data collection begins. In many cases, we should not be surprised to find ourselves asking seriously whether a given study might be an instance of research that should not be done.

Research supervision: Pressure cooking, commodification and 'apprenticeship'

So far as the study of educational phenomena is concerned, probably the most influential single context in terms of consequences contingent upon what we construct through, as, and within qualitative research is the domain of postgraduate research training. The more we have thought about our topic, the more this context has emerged for us as a major focus of concern.

From a supervisory perspective, we see a context of construction marked by an increasingly quantum-driven, client-centred, income-generating/fund-diminishing culture, in which supervision resources are in scarce supply. Many postgraduate Education students come to qualitative research from undergraduate teaching degrees which are often content-dominated, have been short on 'meta level' teaching and learning, and where prior exposure to serious engagement with research methods and literature often approximates to zero. Whereas undergraduate degrees which draw directly on primary theories (Gee 1996: Ch 1) and disciplines (e.g., Sciences, Humanities/Arts) are expected to provide lengthy and, ideally, deep exposure to core theory, conceptual-analytic procedures, research methods, and voluminous research-based literatures, undergraduate teacher education degrees have different priorities. Yet, rigorous research is grounded firmly in knowledge, dispositions, values, orientations, priorities, a sense of purpose, etc., which are exemplified in the traditions of primary disciplines and their secondary/wider appropriations - within what some educational philosophers used to call 'forms and fields of knowledge' (Hirst 1974).

While disciplinary and research landscapes and borders have undergone dramatic changes during recent decades, the fact remains that a solid undergraduate apprenticeship in the methods and theories of disciplines provide a headstart for engaging in systematic research. This is not to say that such an undergraduate apprenticeship is necessary for successful induction as a (qualitative) researcher at postgraduate level, let alone that it is sufficient. The point, rather, is that to do good (responsible, rigorous, effective, useful) research requires sound understanding of and commitment to values, qualities, dispositions, perspectives and the like which are exemplified in a such an apprenticeship: things like a feel for logic and design, a notion that paradigms and perspectives are various and that the differences are significant, awareness that much of what we might want to know has already been thought about by others, familiarity with analytic and conceptual tools such as building frameworks and taxonomies, making purposeful distinctions,

and so on. These can be got in all sorts of ways (cf the problem-solving, conceptual, and design capacities promoted within communities of practice in various trades).

Our experience has been that the kind of 'baseline' understandings, dispositions, etc., we have in mind simply cannot be presupposed on the part of students entering postgraduate research programs in teacher education: indeed, it may well be safer in many institutional contexts to assume the 'baseline' will not exist. This means that postgraduate supervision often requires establishing the baseline that would ideally already be well and truly in place as well, as overseeing the rigorous conduct of a research study. The fact that we are currently witnessing the emergence of mass postgraduate research degrees in education means that production-line approaches often involve trying to address the need for developing meta-perspectives on research processes and outcomes by means of 'hit and run', generic, one-size-fits-all approaches. This limits the scope for engaging closely with and reflecting upon the particulars of qualitative research projects, designs, outcomes and consequences - with the effect that students are often ill-prepared for the hazards, responsibilities, and obligations incurred in any form of research that involves reporting, evaluating, or intervening in the lives of others. Also, as we have intimated earlier, many of those called upon to supervise postgraduate research are themselves struggling with the 'baseline' requirements mentioned above.

Supervisors are often faced with two further conditions which impinge powerfully on what is constructed as and through qualitative research. First, an increasingly competitive career market has ushered in another spiral of credential inflation (Collins 1977; Dore 1976). This establishes a strong tendency for exchange value to triumph over use value in postgraduate qualitative research activity. In some cases this is evident in candidates 'looking for a topic', or having a broad 'area of interest' but no specific pressing issue such that the research could issue in 'useful direct consumption' other than, perhaps, being 'interesting' at the time. This is not a new phenomenon, of course. It is as old as the commodification of research itself. But there is a lot

more of it in postgraduate teacher education than hitherto. To the extent that completing the research as efficiently as possible in order to get the degree becomes the priority, a motive exists that can work powerfully against taking the time and summoning the disposition and effort necessary to achieve understanding, mastery, and execution of the key elements of responsible (qualitative) research: sound research design, thorough conceptualising and theorising of the study, command of relevant literature, diligent mastery of appropriate techniques and procedures, due evaluation of competing research and disciplinary perspectives and, crucially, allowing the full significance of the moral consequences and ethical considerations of research to impact on the work.

Second, the client driven ethos in tandem with imperatives to meet quotas often results in supervisors taking on students in areas where they (supervisors) lack adequate experience and expertise. While there is much to be said for 'learning on the job', becoming proficient in a new area presupposes resources of time and head space that are readily compromised by escalating teaching and administrative loads, as well as the regulatory demands of the research quantum (and the ceaseless reporting it entails). In Colin's case, during the past five years he has not supervised a single research thesis within his professed area of expertise. Generic/meta knowledge and understanding helps, but at nitty gritty points of technological finesse and rigour and content expertise, problems can and have become acute.

That these experiences are not peculiar to an individual have been affirmed by our involvement in examining theses and dissertations and surveying numerous theses in order to get a sense of the field. In many cases work has seemed to us under informed theoretically, technically, conceptually, and ethically: for example, doctoral work ostensibly in case study that fails even to establish clearly what the case is a case of, what bounds the case and, even, what turns on the differences between varying approaches to case study design and conduct as exemplified, say, in the respective approaches of people like Robert Stake (1995) and Robert Yin (1989). Finer omissions include absence of validity and

trustworthiness checks being run on data (Carspecken 1996), inadequate member checking, vague and often inappropriate recourse to triangulation, redescriptions of data standing in for methodologically informed analysis and, even, failure to describe and justify specific procedures for coding and classifying data.

In a nutshell, what is often being constructed as qualitative research and within qualitative research is low quality process and product, and what is being constructed through qualitative research is all too often a diminishing of the Discourse and unconscionable wastage of resources (ranging from people's time and good will to economic and infrastructural resources). The moral consequences here include profound violence to the qualitative researcher's craft/tradition, and to subsequent generations of research students and supervisors for whom work passed as satisfactory now will eventually come to represent benchmarks. It also represents violence to communities of scholarly peers who devote their lives to making their research traditions respectable and efficacious in a world that desperately needs high quality research and critical applications and extensions of that research, yet threatens to get bogged down in an 'ethos' of 'information' (Green 1997; Lankshear, Peters and Knobel 1996).

It may at first seem contentious to consider seemingly 'inanimate entities' like a craft or tradition to have moral rights, and to be bearers of moral consequences. It readily becomes apparent, however, that crafts and traditions are populated by human inhabitants: they are sites of human practice where human interests and welfares are most definitely at stake - whether as participants, peers, consumers, patrons, subjects, etc. Their interests are most definitely impacted by what we turn these discursive practices into through our moment to moment involvement in them. When we take on or are pressed into roles as research supervisors and students we are, moment by moment, playing active roles in influencing what discursive practices of qualitative research become. And this is deeply and inescapably moral.

The qualitative researcher's craft

i. Front end concerns

Morally responsible approaches to qualitative research begin with constructing a carefully planned and well-designed research project. This includes, from the very outset, developing a coherent and logically appropriate theoretical frame for the study, establishing clear and defensible goals and purposes of the study, and identifying the kind of data needed to answer the research questions. Taking care with these requirements goes a long way towards meeting obligations of respect for study participants by building into the research from the beginning recognition that participants are very much more than 'scientific subjects' whose lot is to be studied by researchers. Needless to say, this is an intellectually demanding and time-consuming exercise, not necessarily well adapted to the circumstances of many part-time candidates, in particular, who are often hard-pressed to scrape together snatches of time to 'do their research'.

ii. In process concerns

Gathering information for a qualitative research study should never be an ad hoc process. It should observe rigorous methods and standards for compiling meticulous notes that record events or ideas. Times, dates, contexts, participants and the like should be duly recorded, as should authors, page numbers and sources in text-based research. Detailed notes or 'thick descriptions' (Geertz 1973: 10) enable the researcher to revisit and reflect on events and ideas, to try out different interpretations, and look for corroborating - or conflicting - evidence and authoritative support. This, in turn, builds a strong case for making claims about the validity and trustworthiness of interpretations. In addition, it is also the researcher's responsibility to ensure that collected fieldwork data is kept confidential, and any that is shared with colleagues is doctored in order to maximise participant's anonymity. This extends to finding reliable

storage spaces, returning borrowed artifacts quickly and in the same state in which they were borrowed, and the like - lost or damaged data is difficult to explain to study participants and damages a researcher's credibility.

To maintain ethical professionalism, researchers should take all care to stick to time-frames agreed by study participants, and avoid multiple re-visits to collect additional bits and pieces of data that were not factored in at the start. This means that data collection methods and the timeline need to be carefully planned and aligned with research goals and purposes. Such 'professionalism' strengthens the worth of the research project in participants' eyes, and plays an ambassadorial role for the researcher's scholarly community. Acting professionally does not mean that the researcher maintains a formal distance from participants - this is impossible when conducting ethnographic and case study variants of qualitative research. It does mean, however, that social conventions for interactions are respected, and learning what these are and how to enact/observe them may be a protracted and demanding process. Boundaries exist between what is acceptable and what is unacceptable in terms of researcher and researched interactions. Interview questions and other data collection methods must respect these boundaries. Potential problems can be minimised through designing, for example, interview schedules that are sensitive to the social conventions followed by the respondent, as well as those followed by the researcher. Designing research involves remembering that real people and real lives are involved, and that very real harm can accrue for them as a result of participating in a poorly conceived project.

iii. Back end concerns

The most vexing 'back end' concern of the qualitative researcher's craft is reporting data interpretations. Considerations of data interpretations, and their validity and their trustworthiness, are interwoven with the 'quality' of the research design construction and the methodology employed for any given qualitative project. Commitment to

morally sensitive and responsible research means the researcher's interpretations must be defensible and contribute to our understanding of (complex) phenomena, not pre-determined by their community of inquirers or by a funding body.

Such matters are no longer as clear-cut or simple as once thought. Historically, the internal and external validity and reliability of a study were concerned with the replicability and consistency of methods, conditions, and outcomes. In much early qualitative inquiry evaluations focused on analysing the accuracy and generalisability of findings (cf. Hammersley and Gomm 1997), drawing on epistemological positions according to which validity of interpretations was judged according to how far the findings showed direct correspondence between evidence and some external criterion/a typically seen to have universal status (Kvale 1994: 3; also Romm 1997: 2). Recent developments in qualitative research have challenged these assumptions on the grounds that they ignore subtleties and contradictions in data, tend to construct over-simplified readings of the phenomena being studied, and usually overlook the myriad different ways in which people - including researchers - experience and make sense of the world.

Qualitative researchers interested in more than simply mapping conclusions onto appropriate evidence (Romm 1997: 2) evaluate the validity and trustworthiness of interpretations according to the soundness of argument in the final report rather than the 'truth' of statements and claims (Carspecken 1996: 55, Denzin 1997: 265ff). This approach repudiates claims that researcher effect on interpretations is simply a matter of bias, which can be addressed and minimised - if not eradicated entirely - by carefully avoiding interpretations that are 'at odds with the evidence available about the relevant phenomena' (Hammersley and Gomm 1997: 5). This latter position does not engage with the ways in which evidence itself is a product of research and not an immutable 'given' or 'truth', and suggests that the researcher can adopt a 'studied naivete' (LeCompte and Preissle 1994: 168) and be objective throughout the research process. Indeed, researchers' constructions of evidence and interpretations

are much more complex than this suggests, and researchers interested in producing sound arguments and fair representations of participants are committed to ensuring that 'knowledge-construction activities [are] linked to cultivating forms of relationship which do not unfairly authorise particular ways of accounting at the expense of others' (Romm 1997: 2).

This is not to claim a relativist position in relation to interpreting data, implying that all interpretations are necessarily valid. On the contrary, Romm suggests that claiming multiple realities in qualitative research agendas become a means for proffering sound arguments that 'can be read as invitations to invoke certain discussions in society - rather than supposedly operating to advance "insight into the nature of the world" (to use Hammersley and Gomm's terminology)' (1997: 5). In terms of research outcomes, the moral consequences of adopting either position - unquestioning recourse to a single truth or to relativity - may well contradict research agendas committed to social amelioration (e.g., by enabling traditionally marginalised groups of people to access mainstream goods and services). Romm offers a relevant cautionary observation here. She says

> [i]t could be argued - from a moral point of view - that when researchers operate with a conception of knowledge such as that endorsed by Hammersley and Gomm, they already might be contributing to a process of sustaining unnecessarily certain forms of authoritative relationship in society (1997: 2).

This caution equally applies to the consumers of research, who often are also instigators of qualitative education research projects and agendas.

Consumers of research

According to Jonas Soltis (1989: 125), ethical decision-making and accountability in qualitative research occurs on at least three planes: (i) the personal and interpersonal (ii) the professional, and (iii) the public.

Consumers of research - i.e., those for whom the research has use value - occupy various intersecting points between these three planes. They include the researcher and her wider community of inquirers, theorists, and commentators; participants; groups of people who have a stake or vested interest in the phenomena under study (e.g., schools, parents, community, teacher educators, education departments, the media, etc.); and organisations which have identified a research 'need' and provided funding for researching it (e.g., universities, local, state and federal bodies/agencies).

All too often, researchers seem to feel their obligations to participants cease once data has been collected, member checked and written up in ways that are respectful. We have lost count of teachers who have asked us about various university-based research projects conducted by other researchers in which they had participated: wanting to know when it would be finished, and when they would receive a copy of the final report. Participants typically have a keen interest - whether for personal or professional reasons, or both - in what happens to data they contribute. It is important they have access to tangible evidence that their participation in a study was valued and worthwhile. One possible moral consequence of not sending copies of the final research report to participants is that they may refuse to cooperate in subsequent research conducted by the same researcher or even by different researchers. This is already the case in Brisbane where we have been refused access to a number of schools and classrooms because principals and teachers are wary - and rightly so - of the kind of 'cultural thieving' that Glesne (1985: 55) warns researchers against.

One result of the current commodification and warehousing of education research is that research is done increasingly for reasons other than to address 'real' problems experienced and identified by real people (cf. Romm 1997: 2). David Fetterman (1989: 124) discusses the relationship between government funding and research in terms of identifying who is in control of the means and ends of a investigation. For Fetterman, the ethical question to ask in response to a tender for research advertised by a funding agency is: "Would

this study be a useful and productive research endeavour and would it inform the public about a socially significant problem?" (ibid.). Responding to this question depends in large part on 'whether the government officials were open to the research findings - wherever they led - or had already formed a political conclusion' (ibid.). Likewise, Romm (1997: 2) reminds qualitative researchers to resist 'the temptation to tailor research to serve goals other than the search for knowledge and/or the temptation to tailor the research process (collection, analysis or interpretation of evidence) to bolster predetermined conclusions'.

One example of tensions between a government commissioning agent and the findings of a national project has recently been reported widely in the media. Researchers involved in the National Literacy Survey commissioned by David Kemp, the federal minister for education, have been surprised by this minister's interpretations of the findings of the national survey of Year 5 students (e.g., Dr Andrews, JJJ national radio news, 1 October 1997) and continue to point out that the Minister is misrepresenting outcomes in order to support the national literacy benchmarking initiative that was meant to be based on survey outcomes (Meiers 1997), but was instigated well before survey outcomes were available (Curriculum Corporation 1997).

Competitive tenders for research, increased pushes for academics to win ARC research funds, reduced funding sources for research that does not 'fit' national and state 'research' agendas, and the like, mean that qualitative research and its outcomes are no longer necessarily an organic part of knowledge construction. Indeed, increased workloads for academics often mean research projects are left unfinished, or that familiar research problems are revisited over and over again with little contribution made to the field. One moral consequence of this situation is that, despite numerous cautions (e.g., Clough 1992, Denzin 1997, Romm 1997), qualitative educational research in education in Australia risks becoming a key apparatus of governmentality, by which researchers are constructed and normalised more as instruments of the state than as intellectuals and future-thinking advisers (cf. Foucault 1977).

The researcher

The moral consequences for researchers themselves - including student researchers - of what we construct as and through qualitative research are as important and complex as those for other groups and agents impacted by research activity. Here again, it is important to acknowledge that the 'we' who participate in constructing includes many other actors than researchers alone. The 'we' is a 'body corporate' or 'public' of constructors including funders, policy makers and agenda setters, administrators, offices of research, universities, larger communities of research practice, as well as those identifiable researchers, teachers/supervisors of research, and examiners of research who constitute more specific and localised programs and projects.

Throughout this paper we have mainly focused on actual and potential moral pitfalls and factors and considerations germane to generating and avoiding such pitfalls. In the highly charged, confusing, complex, and demanding contexts of 'new times' (Hall 1991) we are regularly exhorted to 'think positive!', and/or focus on possibilities and opportunities rather than constraints and impediments. This is, indeed, important to keep in mind - but not to the point where going along with the exhortation becomes morally reckless, irresponsible, tantamount to being given a free pass to a moral holiday. Positive orientations that downplay constraints, impediments, and pitfalls are often doomed to disappointment, or subsequent regret. One essential component of any kind of responsible positive agenda (research or otherwise) is an informed awareness of potential issues or undesirable outcomes associated with enacting the agenda, or snags that have to be addressed or transcended in the process. We have played up the precautionary tone here because we believe we may be pushing on too often and too unreflectively with a lot of research activity without attending to conditions that may actually be subverting and otherwise undermining our intentions and aspirations. Of course, the positive moral consequences of unfettered and uncompromised high quality practices of qualitative research are clear enough. They include deep and enriched

understandings of the production of lived meanings that provide bases and clues for further enhancing educational, cultural, social, economic, and political life - especially for the least advantaged. They include involvement by participants who genuinely 'own' the research process, their part in it, and benefits accruing from it: including the realisation of their voices and namings of the world (Freire 1972), and their enlarged capacity to demystify research and enact it in their own behalf. We have sought to identify some processes and means by which researchers can approximate more closely to such ideals.

But research always inhabits a larger context than the immediate research practice itself, and we see a pressing need right now as researchers to name clearly some actual and potential deleterious moral consequences for researchers and their work present in the current Australian context. We will note just four of these here.

First, the larger contextual conditions of research training and conduct within our faculties may well contribute to creating a deskilled field of qualitative research endeavour, and bring that field into disrepute, if we do not identify and address them urgently. Education research has typically had to battle for perceptions of respectability within the wider social science arena as, of course, has qualitative research per se. We simply cannot afford to contribute to building a corpus of work which does not honour the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological advances documented in any number of exemplary texts and studies. Yet, almost inevitably, that is what we do when we turn research into an integral component of market-driven strategies for 'institutional survival' in tandem with generous interpretations of 'advanced standing/credit for prior learning' to fill places. We would be much better advised to emphasise coursework and library-based research and scholarship where we cannot vouchsafe morally responsible research training and, especially, where we cannot even be sure if there is sound local knowledge of the myriad ways in which well intentioned activity might still infringe moral requirements. With respect to research training, and the direct and indirect consequences of that, Soltis (1989: 129)

insists we must enlarge students' horizons of public consciousness. What they will do as individual and professional researchers may have a far reaching impact on unnamed and unknown individuals and subgroups in our society. Education is a public trust. All who are given the power to shape and direct it have a great responsibility for the that the lives of numerous human beings turn out.

How completely can those of us who are research supervisors be sure we have met our responsibilities here, and in what proportion of cases? Sometimes our best is not good enough from the moral point of view.

Second, pressures to generate income and wider market opportunities through 'hired gun' research have the potential to implicate us in agendas and outcomes we may later regret. This can occur in at least two ways. Where we engage in research that entails delivering reports and losing control of how report contents and results are used, we can end up in situations like that described above (p. 18) concerning the national survey of students. Alternatively, our research might be used by the media in ways we find unacceptable. Whatever unwanted outcomes might occur from our research, damage control can at least be optimised when we retain control of our research. We need also to be on the alert at present for potential uses of our research by our own institutions to try and establish profiles, credentials, or 'demonstrated capacity' to secure initiatives/delivery opportunities/consultancies we find morally unacceptable. While we may not be able to prevent such appropriations in the first place, we certainly have the option to avoid becoming further implicated in subsequent agendas.

Third, contract research can be an invitation to personal alienation in the classic sense of locking us into productive work from which we are or become creatively, intellectually, or morally estranged. To the extent one loses control over the direction of research - which can easily occur when our research 'progress' is subject to approval by advisory committees or funder representatives - there are real dangers of being financially accountable for delivering work that 'turns back on us' as an alien expression of ourselves/expression of some 'alien' self. At a time when

many funded qualitative research opportunities are invitations to construct research practice under 'hired gun' conditions, we need to be careful. Even traditionally 'liberal' sources of funding are becoming increasingly conditioned by 'national priorities', with subtle and not so subtle capacity to influence our perceptions of what kinds of proposals stand better chances of success - other things being equal. Becoming complicit is often an unwitting affair. Of course, the more that research is commodified - that is, the more we engage in research to produce exchange values - the more unavoidable alienation becomes. Anyone who sells their labour for wages to others who determine how this labour will be used and for what is vulnerable to such alienation. And there is certainly no ground for thinking that academics and other researchers have any greater right to escape this than any other worker. The fact remains, however, that academics do retain options here - e.g., contributing to the quantum through scholarship rather than 'hired gun' work; taking on more teaching, and so on. If and when it all becomes too alienating, it's probably time to leave/do something different. Despite surface appearances to the contrary, this too is always an option, even if it is a tough option. Chances are it's tougher for many other categories of workers than for researchers.

Finally, the moral consequences of our research constructions may include compromising our own integrity by exploiting others (e.g., participants) or (unintentionally) failing to respect their interests or dignity through the conduct of our work; by contributing to discrediting our craft and/or our community of peers (Romm 1997: 2); by wasting other people's time and other resources producing unnecessary/otiose or poor quality outcomes, and so on. Some key ways in which such consequences can result from what we construct through and as qualitative research have been addressed above. Here, as elsewhere, the obligation is to attend with the utmost vigilance to the moral dimension of research, to be ceaseless in our efforts to understand this dimension more and more thoroughly - remembering always that it includes very much more than is accounted for in most institutional codes of ethical research conduct - learning from our mistakes and transgressions when we make them, and being strong enough to

say 'no' when our knowledge and experience and moral sense indicates this is the proper thing to do.

Conclusion

It has not been our intention to undermine or discourage involvement in qualitative research per se. Rather, we have sought to contribute something to our collective awareness of what is involved in taking necessary steps to safeguard the moral integrity of our research. Our choices may be tough at times, but they are never 'no choices'. By way of ending, let us reiterate a constructive suggestion based on a distinction used by Bill Green (personal communication). Green speaks of broad kinds of research identified in terms of 'sites': namely lab, field and library. All too often we forget that research includes work done in the 'library' - i.e., based on documents. While the hegemony of 'real science' discourages us from thinking of anything much as research if it isn't associated with lab, the discouragement in educational circles is often strongest in respect of library. In fact, the phrase 'research and scholarship' seems to legitimate the exclusion of library-sited inquiry from the category of research. We must resist this: insisting on full and equal recognition of library-sited research as research in the full sense of the word.

One way of doing this is by constructing more of our own research work, and more research work by students - who often think 'research' implies collecting data directly from human beings by some means or another - around the library site. This can become a classic act of value-adding resistance to forces which would constrain our understanding and practice. To the value of reducing opportunities for creating unwanted moral consequences which can bedevil qualitative research, we can add the further values of enacting a praxis against an interest-serving hegemonic account of 'research' and, simultaneously, of encouraging apprenticeships in disciplinary rigour which will afford many understandings and dispositions that can only enhance the moral integrity of subsequent excursions into qualitative research.

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